AN 9.36 — Jhana Sutta: Mental Absorption

English translation by Thanissaro Bhikkhu.

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Changes: Presentation only: original HTML markup reflowed into plain text; wording, numbering and source repetitions retained. No repetitions expanded.

Completeness: ABBREVIATED. Every source-unit character is preserved, including introductions, notes and verse structure. Thanissaro's collection-level note explicitly states that repetitions were cut: https://www.dhammatalks.org/suttas/about.html. This is evidence about the translation method, not an assertion that every individual unit contains an omission; no repetitions reconstructed.

Text

"I tell you, the ending of the mental fermentations depends on the first jhana... the second jhana... the third... the fourth... the dimension of the infinitude of space... the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness... the dimension of nothingness. I tell you, the ending of the mental fermentations depends on the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception.

"'I tell you, the ending of the mental fermentations depends on the first jhana.' Thus it has been said. In reference to what was it said? There is the case where a monk, secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities, enters & remains in the first jhana: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. He regards whatever phenomena there that are connected with form, feeling, perception, fabrications, & consciousness, as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, a disintegration, an emptiness, not-self. He turns his mind away from those phenomena, and having done so, inclines his mind to the property of deathlessness: 'This is peace, this is exquisite — the resolution of all fabrications; the relinquishment of all acquisitions; the ending of craving; dispassion; cessation; Unbinding.'

"Suppose that an archer or archer's apprentice were to practice on a straw man or mound of clay, so that after a while he would become able to shoot long distances, to fire accurate shots in rapid succession, and to pierce great masses. In the same way, there is the case where a monk... enters & remains in the first jhana: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. He regards whatever phenomena there that are connected with form, feeling, perception, fabrications, & consciousness, as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, a disintegration, an emptiness, not-self. He turns his mind away from those phenomena, and having done so, inclines his mind to the property of deathlessness: 'This is peace, this is exquisite — the resolution of all fabrications; the relinquishment of all acquisitions; the ending of craving; dispassion; cessation; Unbinding.'

"Staying right there, he reaches the ending of the mental fermentations. Or, if not, then — through this very dhamma-passion, this very dhamma-delight, and from the total wasting away of the first five of the fetters[1] — he is due to be reborn [in the Pure Abodes], there to be totally unbound, never again to return from that world.

"'I tell you, the ending of the mental fermentations depends on the first jhana.' Thus was it said, and in reference to this was it said.

(Similarly with the second, third, and fourth jhana.)

"'I tell you, the ending of the mental fermentations depends on the dimension of the infinitude of space.' Thus it has been said. In reference to what was it said? There is the case where a monk, with the complete transcending of perceptions of [physical] form, with the disappearance of perceptions of resistance, and not heeding perceptions of diversity, [perceiving,] 'Infinite space,' enters & remains in the dimension of the infinitude of space. He regards whatever phenomena there that are connected with feeling, perception, fabrications, & consciousness, as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, a disintegration, an emptiness, not-self. He turns his mind away from those phenomena, and having done so, inclines his mind to the property of deathlessness: 'This is peace, this is exquisite — the resolution of all fabrications; the relinquishment of all acquisitions; the ending of craving; dispassion; cessation; Unbinding.'

"Suppose that an archer or archer's apprentice were to practice on a straw man or mound of clay, so that after a while he would become able to shoot long distances, to fire accurate shots in rapid succession, and to pierce great masses. In the same way, there is the case where a monk... enters & remains in the dimension of the infinitude of space. He regards whatever phenomena there that are connected with feeling, perception, fabrications, & consciousness, as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, a disintegration, an emptiness, not-self. He turns his mind away from those phenomena, and having done so, inclines his mind to the property of deathlessness: 'This is peace, this is exquisite — the resolution of all fabrications; the relinquishment of all acquisitions; the ending of craving; dispassion; cessation; Unbinding.'

"Staying right there, he reaches the ending of the mental fermentations. Or, if not, then — through this very dhamma-passion, this very dhamma-delight, and from the total wasting away of the first five of the fetters — he is due to be reborn [in the Pure Abodes], there to be totally unbound, never again to return from that world.

"'I tell you, the ending of the mental fermentations depends on the dimension of the infinitude of space.' Thus was it said, and in reference to this was it said.

(Similarly with the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness and the dimension of nothingness.)

"Thus, as far as the perception-attainments go, that is as far as gnosis-penetration goes. As for these two dimensions — the attainment of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception & the attainment of the cessation of feeling & perception — I tell you that they are to be rightly explained by those monks who are meditators, skilled in attaining, skilled in attaining & emerging, who have attained & emerged in dependence on them."

Notes

1.

Self-identity views, grasping at precepts & practices, uncertainty, sensual passion, and resistance.

See also: AN 10.6; AN 10.7.